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SUBJECT: SUNNI LEADER DISCUSSES IIP DEMANDS FOR JOINING
MODERATE FRONT

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4609

[I](#)B. BAGHDAD 4616

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[I](#)1. (S) Summary: Minister of Planning and senior Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) leader, Ali Baban, explained to the Ambassador in a December 19 meeting his party's concerns about participating in the moderate front before their recently presented demands have been met. IIP needs to demonstrate to their members the benefit of joining this coalition, Baban explained, which is why IIP demands include increased protection at hospital, balanced guards at checkpoints, and strong GOI condemnation of all militias. Baban commented that the Prime Minister (PM) is also hesitant about joining the coalition because the PM believes SCIRI might use the coalition to remove him from power. In economic matters, Baban stated that it will be a "problem" if the Kurds do not receive their share of the central government's defense budget. For the hydrocarbons law, Baban explained revenue distribution has been agreed upon, but IIP opposes language that allows regional governments in any authorities for future field exploration and deve lopment. End Summary.

AMONG IIP DEMANDS: SECURITY AT HOSPITALS, DETAINEE RELEASE

[I](#)2. (S) The IIP political office drafted an official response to the National Front proposal citing the deteriorating security situation Iraq's Sunnis face. IIP presented the paper to moderate front representatives during a December 18 planning session. The paper contends that the IIP joined the political process with an "equal degree of steadfastness and patience," receiving only increased marginalization and the spread of militias into government institutions and security forces.

[I](#)3. (S) The IIP listed six conditions which need to be met before they will join the moderate front coalition. These demands are: A) formation of a balanced emergency force comprised of no less than ten thousand soldiers to bring security to Baghdad; B) balance at all checkpoints inside Baghdad; (Note. Baban later clarified this statement to mean joint Sunni and Shia checkpoint guards or MNF-I presence if mixed guards are not possible. End Note) C) GOI announcement disbanding and disarming militias and prohibiting weapons on the streets; D) ensuring medical services at all hospitals and coroners officers and providing protection for teachers and students against murder and abduction resulting from bad security at these institutions; E) the release of 5,000 detainees IIP will name; F) returning all unlawfully acquired mosques during a specific time period.

"MISTRUST" CAUSED DEMANDS; IIP STILL LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE

¶4. (S) The Ambassador began the meeting by raising IIP's list of demands. These demands should not be prerequisites for joining the moderate front, the Ambassador said, but should be incorporated into the front's program as serious issues which should be addressed immediately. Baban agreed, stating that he, along with a minority of IIP members, shared the Ambassador's opinion and had opposed sending the letter. However, he said, there is currently an "atmosphere of mistrust," with IIP members concerned that they will join this coalition and continue to be "marginalized" and unable to improve conditions for their people. For this reason, Baban said, "the letter went forward."

¶5. (S) Describing the difficult situation Sunnis face in Iraq, Baban explained that the Sunnis "lose hundreds daily" to the violence. IIP members are asking what benefit have they gained from entering the political process. IIP drafted this letter with these conditions, Baban continued, to ensure that joining this alliance results in deliverables that can be presented to their constituents. People are not satisfied with the IIP, Baban surmised, and for this reason IIP's political leadership "will need guarantees before submitting to the coalition."

¶6. (S) When pressed as to whether IIP will participate, Baban expressed optimism, saying that during his trip to the US, Vice President and IIP leader, Tariq al-Hashimi, discussed this issue exhaustively. Baban said he believes that al-Hashimi's initial reservations have been addressed and

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that the VP is ready to move forward with the moderate front. Baban warned, however, that in order for the rest of IIP to agree as well some of these demands will need to be addressed and IIP will need to receive "guarantees" that they will not be "excluded" from the decision-making process.

BABAN EXLPAINS SHIA STRATEGY, PM CONCERNS WITH FRONT

¶7. (S) Baban noted that it is not only IIP with concerns about the moderate front. While the PM remains "connected to the Shia strategy," he has concerns participation in this front could eventually be used against him, Baban said. Asked to explain "the general strategy" to which Baban claimed all Shia political parties subscribed, Baban said the Shia plan is "complete domination." The Shia want to relegate Sunnis to "second class citizens." There might be "differences in implementation," Baban continued, but "at the end of the day it is all the same strategy." The Shia will use this new alliance to achieve their objective, he concluded.

¶8. (S) Returning to the PM's hesitation about the moderate front, Baban explained that his political advisors object for two reasons. First, they do not trust SCIRI and see the moderate front as an opportunity to stage a coup and replace the PM with Vice President Adil Abdul Mehdi (SCIRI). Second, although there is growing tension between the PM and Shia extremist Moqtada al-Sadr, the PM is concerned joining a front that appears against al-Sadr. Baban continued, saying he believed that the PM would "go to war against JAM" if he was confident SCIRI would not try to oust him. However, if the PM suspects SCIRI "has a plot" to remove him, he will need to maintain al-Sadr as a political ally.

¶9. (S) The Ambassador agreed that the PM is hesitant to trust the moderate front members, but noted that KRG President Masoud Barzani (KDP) has guaranteed the PM that this front will not attempt to replace or marginalize him. The PM

trusts Barzani, the Ambassador said. Baban replied that this front will only serve to make Abdul Mehdi stronger and the PM knows this. Baban concluded that SCIRI leader, Abdulaziz al-Hakim, IIP and the US need to give the PM guarantees before he fully endorses the moderate front.

OUTSIDE MONITORING AND AYAD ALLAWI'S RETURN?

¶10. (S) The Ambassador asked whether IIP would be satisfied if an outside party monitored the front to ensure agreements were acted upon. This had been a requirement of for former Prime Minister and leader of the secular Iraqiyya party list, Ayad Allawi, when he was approached about joining. Baban responded that an outside monitor would resolve some of IIP's concerns and further stated that IIP would welcome Allawi's inclusion, commenting that "we trust him."

BABAN THINKS KRG SHOULD RECEIVE PART OF GOI DEFENSE BUDGET

¶11. (S) Turning to economic concerns, Baban raised a "brewing" issue, citing the central government's defense budget and the portion allocated for the Kurds. During a recent meeting KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told Baban the Americans do not believe the Kurds should receive a portion of the central government's defense budget. The Ambassador explained that the issue is command, control, size, and equipment issues with regard to Kurdish forces, between Baghdad and the Kurdish region. Baban said that he supports the Kurds and believes they should be allocated a portion of the GOI defense fund. He stated further that the Kurds might agree, with strict conditions, to put elements of the peshmerga under central government control. (Note. This issue was not raised in a December 18 meeting, Ref B, between the DCM and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih Kurdish, PUK. End Note).

IIP SUPPORTS CENTRALIZED CONTROL OVER FUTURE OIL FIELDS

¶12. (S) The Ambassador then asked whether the hydrocarbons law had been resolved. Baban replied that agreement had been reached establishing a central fund which will allocate oil revenues based on provincial populations. There remains, however, disagreement about the control over the rights for

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future field exploration. There are three different opinions, Baban explained. The Kurds argue that regions should have complete authority to award contracts for field exploration, limiting the central government's role to final approval. The Minister of Oil, however, supports joint-authority in which regional governments could award contracts with a federal entity reviewing and possibly refusing the contracts. Finally, Baban said, there is the IIP advocated-position which removes all control from regional governments and places it solely under the central government's authority.

¶13. (S) When questioned why the IIP supports this option, Baban replied it was "a safeguard against the future." It is possible that if regions are allowed any authority in the contract process they may, in the beginning, work with the central government as required. However, IIP fears that eventually the regions will stop requesting approval and instead move forward on their own, Baban said. "It is dangerous," Baban said "to tempt other provinces with more independence."

COMMENT

¶14. (S) The IIP list of demands or pre-conditions is an unwelcome delay to the moderate front discussions. Al-Hashimi's Baghdad return on December 20 should clarify IIP's stance and it is likely that these demands could change from prerequisites to agenda items the moderate front addresses immediately. Baban's observations about the PM echo assessments made from other sources. This mistrust between Iraq's political leaders will be the biggest obstacle the moderate front needs to overcome if they are to work together to increase stability and improve security.

KHALILZAD